

State funds will help connect Ohio utility's fuel cell to grid

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The state of Ohio will contribute \$839,000 to a fuel cell venture being built by American Municipal Power-Ohio and the city of Westerville, Gov. Bob Taft said Feb. 27. The governor visited the Westerville Electric Division late last month to announce the project: a 250-kw fuel cell power plant that will be installed at a substation in Westerville.

The fuel cell power plant, manufactured by FuelCell Energy of Danbury, Conn., will cost about \$1.3 million and is expected to be on line by the end of this year. It will be tied to Westerville's grid and will help meet baseload demand for electricity.

The project is unusual because of the size of the fuel cell power plant and because it will be hooked to the grid, said Kent Carson, a spokesman for AMP-Ohio. This is the first time a utility-grade [fuel cell] generator is being plugged into the grid to be used as base load, he said.

AMP-Ohio partnered with the Westerville Electric Division on this project. The two applied for the state grant in December.

Westerville has always committed itself to providing affordable, reliable power for our customers while exploring the use of technologies that are environmentally friendly, said Westerville Electric Division Manager Andrew Boatright. This project is an example of that commitment.

A fuel cell power plant generates power by converting a hydrogen-rich fuel, in this case natural gas, to electricity through an electrochemical process. Since the fuel cell does not combust fuel, there are virtually no emissions from the plant. The fuel cell will be highly efficient, requiring approximately 50% less fuel per kilowatt-hour than the average conventional power plant, said AMP-Ohio and Westerville.

We know that public power communities must continue to develop innovative ways to meet their customer demand, said AMP-Ohio President Marc Gerken. With this project, we are putting ourselves on the forefront of this emerging technology and by doing so are demonstrating our commitment to developing a diverse portfolio of power supply resources.

The state grant came from Gov. Taft's Third Frontier project, a 10-year, \$1.6-billion plan to create more high-wage jobs through the expansion of

Ohio high-tech research capabilities and promotion of start-up companies.

AMP-Ohio is the wholesale power supplier and services provider for 86 public power communities in Ohio and adjoining states.

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